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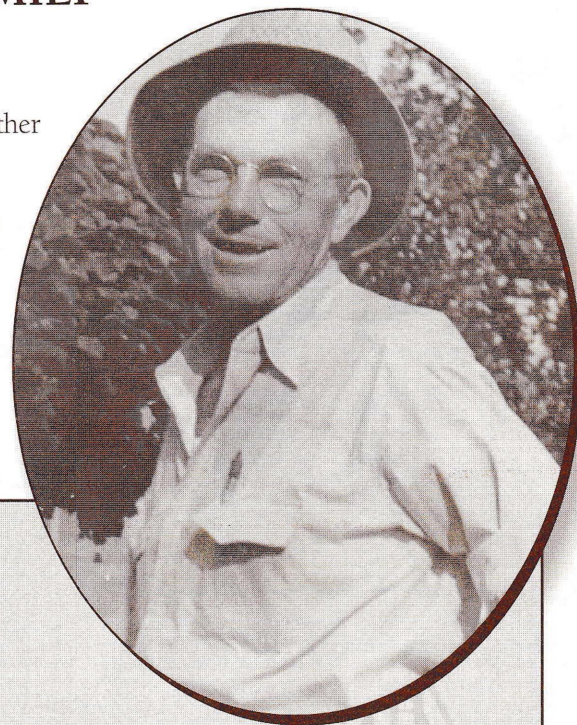
JACOB "JAKE" ERNEST HANDEL FAMILY

By Ralph Lea and Janice Roth

Jacob "Jake" Ernest Handel was born on September 7, 1893 in Menno, South Dakota. His parents, Jacob and Mary Jenner Handel, came from Odessa, Russia 14 years before Jake was born. As homesteaders, the Handels received 160 acres of free land. They agreed to plant 10 acres of timber and the U.S. Government gave them another 160 acres free.

The senior Handel was a grain

farmer but discovered that the weather was very harsh in South Dakota. So when in 1899 he heard from William "Columbus" Hieb that life was better for farmers in California he sold his 320 acres of Dakota land and traveled by train to Lodi with his wife Mary, his four sons, Christ, John, William and Jake; and his three daughters Carolyn, Elizabeth and



▲ 1903; Jacob, Jake, Emanuel, Anna Maria and Annie Handel, in front of home on Alpine Road. Inset: Jake E. Handel



▲ Emanuel F. Handel, brother and partner of Jake.

Jake and his mules. ►

Anna. Both Christ and Carolyn were born in Russia. There were three other Russian-German families in the area when the Handel's arrived.

He purchased 130 acres on Alpine Road east of Lodi for \$60.00 per acre. Grain farmers had overused the land and the farmhouse was neglected. Jake's father put one half of his land into vineyards while the remainder of the land was planted in grain. Like most families the Handel's had a small dairy of 10-12 cows. Usually the number of cows was determined by the size of the family. The children milked the cows and the surplus butter, milk and eggs were sold in town as a secondary income.

Jake remembers that his "father was a clean shaven man who expected no nonsense from his children while his mother was easy going and hard working. She was raised on a farm and knew what was expected from her as a farmer's wife."

Jake's mother often asked the boys to select a fast horse when she went to town to buy clothing or to visit her daughters. "She did not want to eat someone else's dust," according to Jake. On Saturday father went to town for groceries. Beckman, Welch and Thompson was the general store.

Clothing was bought at Friedberger & Kaiser or Newfield's.

Jake went to the one room Alpine School. A pump house and hand pump provided water for drinking and washing. "One kid pumped and the other kid washed his hands." The one drinking cup was on a chain attached to the hand pump. The teacher was not outside for the 10:00 a.m. or the 3:00 p.m. recess. The boys played games like "shiddy," pig'n the hole, baseball and football using a pig's bladder. Most of the farm boys had a mix of marbles consisting of "chalkies" (cheapest) "glassies" (good) and "half-moons"

(the best).

In 1912 a second room and a second teacher were added to Alpine School. The teachers drove their horse and buggies to school each day. The older boys removed the harnesses, fed and watered the horses. One day they decided to switch the buggies before school closed for the day. The teachers left class and climbed into the buggy attached to their horse. Nothing was said that afternoon or the next morning when they returned to school. The prank backfired. It was no fun because the teachers



did not react.

The school picnic was held at the oak grove on Kettelman Lane and Highway 88. Ed Jury owned the land and opened it up to the public. There



Horsepower on the Handel Ranch. ▲

was a merry-go-round pulled by a horse. A wagon came to the children's house to pick them up on that day and took them home later in the afternoon.

Jake recalled holiday celebrations. Christmas Day was a time for a good dinner of maybe two ducks and a bag of candy for each child. A large pine limb was used as the family Christmas tree. Jake was in his twen-

ties before he had turkey to eat. Most people ate ducks or chickens for Thanksgiving.

In 1931 a brick building with three classrooms and an auditorium was constructed while the old wooden Alpine School was moved to Church and Locust Streets in Lodi to become the Lutheran Church's first parochial school in Lodi.

The senior Handel was one of the

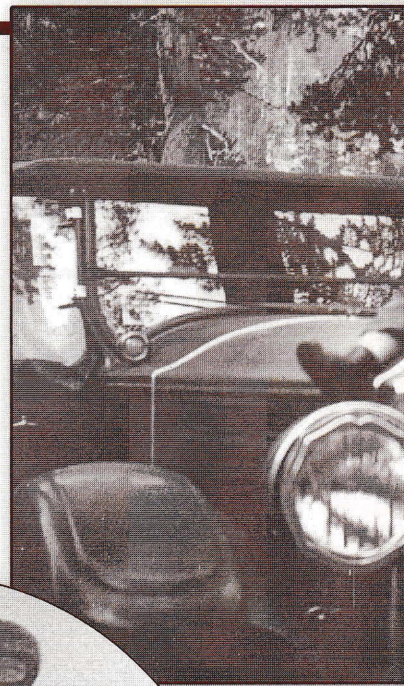
first viticulturists in the area. He sold his Burgers (white grapes) and Zinfandels (black grapes) to the West Winery for cash (\$12.00 a ton). The Black Prince were eating grapes and were shipped to the market back east. The grape vines were planted in rows 10 feet apart in each direction. The Flame Tokay Grape later replaced the Black Prince Grape. Watermelons were planted in the vineyard rows for



Plowing on the Handel Ranch. ▲



▲ Chappuis Ranch.



Martha and Jake Handel. ►

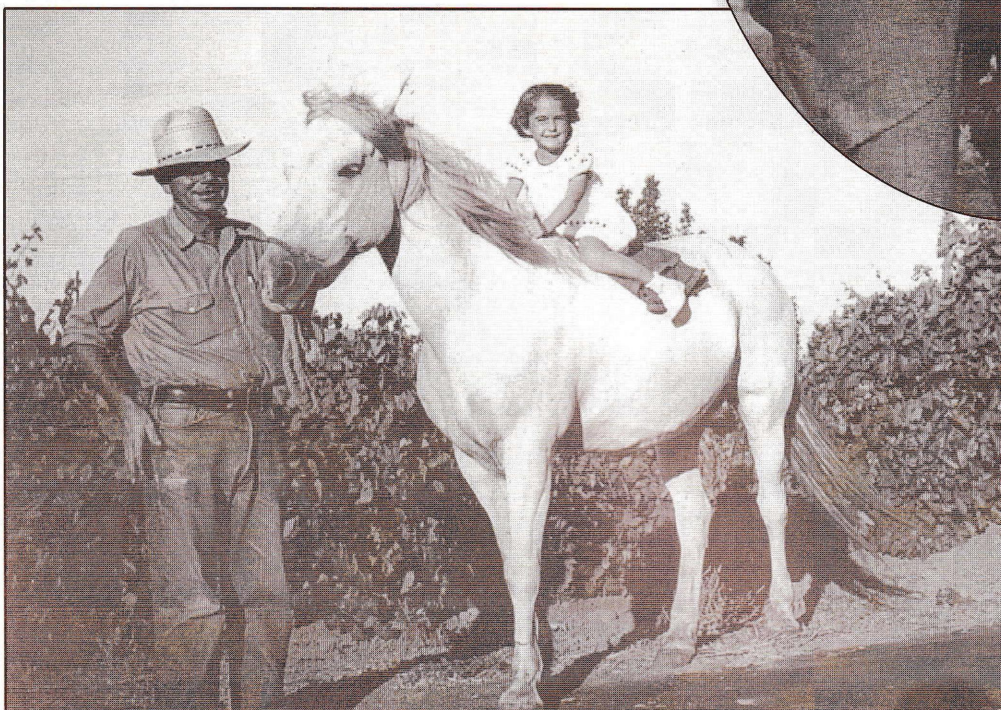


◀ Lodi watermelons.

Jake Handel and granddaughter, Bobbie Will.



▲ Early almond k



▲ Emery Thompson sold Samson Engines made in S



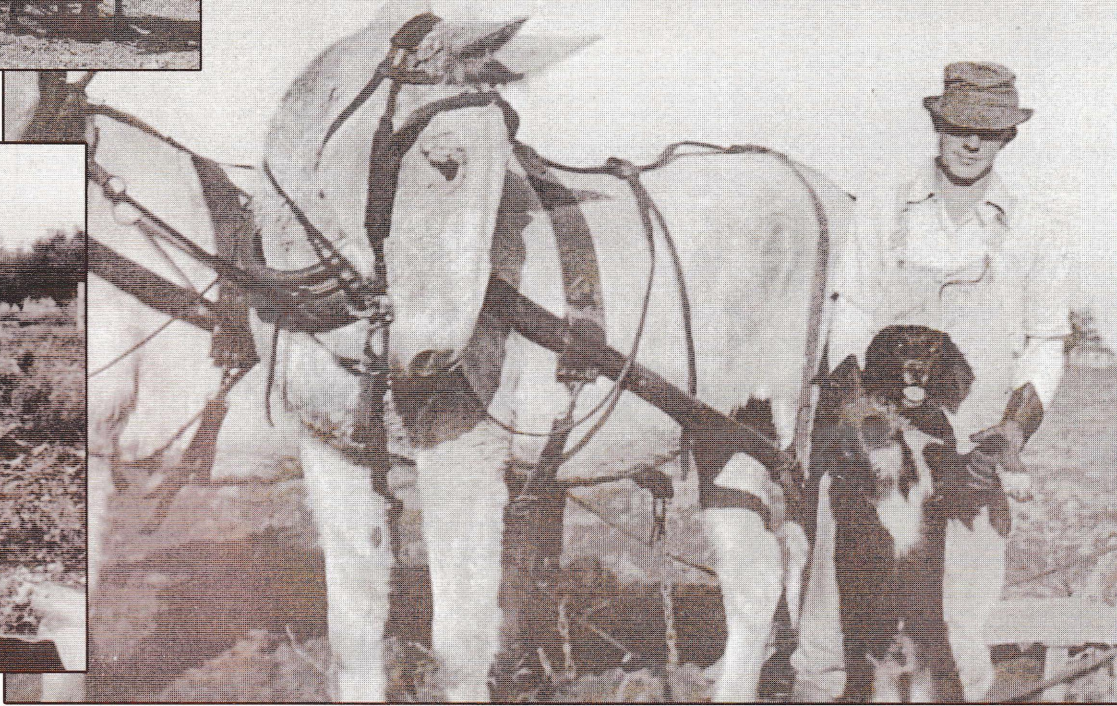
Bob Handel and 1925 Buick at summer camp. ▲



locking in Lodi.



ckton.



▲ Jake Handel and his faithful dog.

Above: Jake on his horse, Martha holding the bridal.



▲ Sulphur demonstration with backpack.

a quick cash crop when the vines were small and not producing.

The grape vines were not irrigated until 1913 when it was an especially dry year. The farmers who had water for their alfalfa pumped water to their vines that year.

Mules and horses were used for cutting weeds and cultivators were used to stir up the ground. Plowing was done when needed. One son used four horses to plow, another son followed with a single horse to cut

weeds near the vines and a third son followed with a horse and grape hoe. About ten acres were plowed a day. A few days later a harrow was used to break up large dirt clods. Jake always took a gallon container of water out to the fields when he was working. The container was wrapped in a wet burlap jacket that sat outside overnight to get cool.

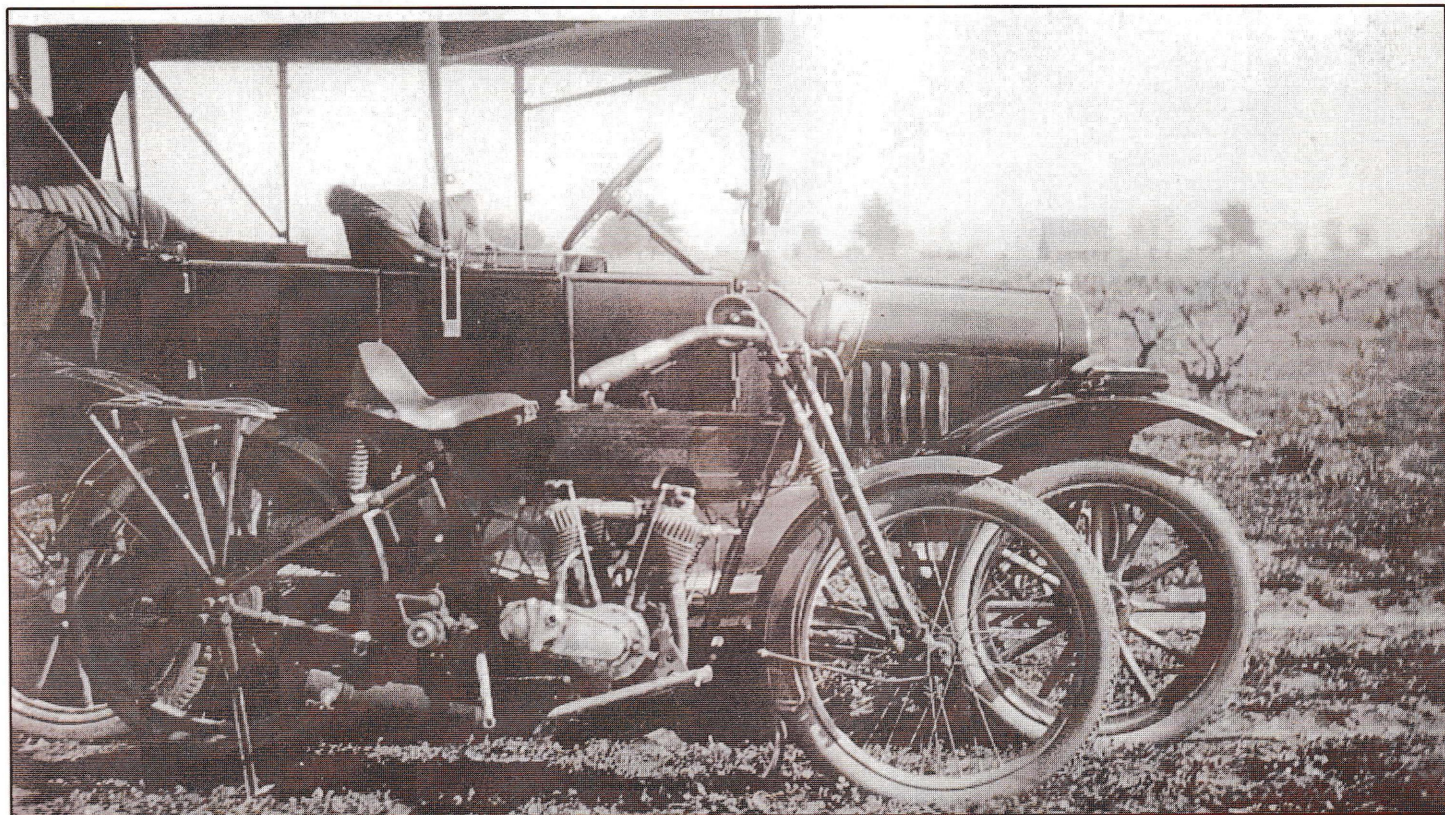
Work started at sunrise but by 6:00p.m. it was time to leave the fields and tend to the animals. The

cows had to be milked before dinner. Jake remembers his mother saying, "You better milk that cow dry or she will give less milk tomorrow."

Rabbits were a major problem for young grape vines. They ate the new growth. The farmer placed pieces of watermelon with poison around his vineyard. Later greyhounds were used to keep the rabbits under control.

Mildew was another major problem for grapes. Sultry days would encourage fungus growth. Hand pumps were used to spread sulfur. The pumps were carried on the farmers back. Later a large apparatus pulled by two horses spread the sulfur by blowing it on the vines.

Every ranch needed a well for water. The Handel's needed to irrigate the alfalfa patch and water was needed at the house. A pit had to be dug deep enough to be close to the water table (16 feet at first). A centrifugal pump was placed in the hole. On the top of the ground was a gas engine with a belt linking up the pump. Pumps like the Stockton's Sampson and the Sterling Engines were the favorite brands of the farmers for this



▲ Model T Ford and Excelsor Bike, Handel Ranch.

use. As the owners started leveling their farmland they were able to better control the water flow and irrigate efficiently.

In 1910, following tradition, the senior Handel moved into Lodi leaving his four sons to tend the house and land. They each had to prove themselves to be reliable in order to be given a share (40 acres) of the farm. Jake, the youngest, was hired out to his older brothers by the father for a \$300.00 fee that his father kept. Jake received his share of land at age twenty-two. He and his brother Emanuel were partners in farming until 1930.

Jake met his wife, Martha Kolthoff, at a chiverree party. A chiverree was a party held the first night after a marriage or when the newlyweds returned home from their honeymoon. Friends came over late at night and made a lot of noise outside the house by banging pots and pans and yelling. The newlyweds were expected to arise and provide the revelers with food and drink.

Jake and his new bride on a motorcycle, with his two brothers following in an automobile, went to the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco.

By 1917 Jake had purchased his first automobile, a used Flanders Studebaker for \$150.00. In 1920 Jake built a new farmhouse for his family on Alpine Road. Jake and Martha had one son, Robert and three daughters, Bernice, Mabel and Ruth. Jake later gave the home to his only son Robert.

When prohibition started in 1919 Jake thought he might have to pull out his vines. Instead the market price of grapes went up. A family was legally able to make 200 gallons of wine for home consumption. Stockton bootleggers came to Jake's ranch to purchase his "seconds" that were stacked in 50 pound lug boxes. They paid \$20.00 a ton cash and hauled the grapes away.

In 1920 Jake purchased a transport truck with Budda engine for the ranch for \$2200.00. It had the low gears and power to haul crops in the deep sandy soil. It had a magneto rather than a battery so had to be started with a hand crank. The truck is now

at the San Joaquin Co. Museum.

When prohibition was repealed in 1933, individual grape sales declined. Jake and his brothers helped to establish the East-side Winery, a co-operative owned by the farmers who provided the grapes. The grape market went up during the 1940's during World War II and even after. The farmers missed the Japanese farm laborers during the war and had to rely on rural folk from Oklahoma.

He traded his finest team for a new Fordson Tractor. Many



An Orchard 70 pulling an Oliver Iron Age Sprayer. ▲



▲ 1930 Victor Forduster, made from a Model T Ford, was self-propelled and later became a one-man operation. Ted Heil and Schlotthauer Brothers were both manufacturers. Photo courtesy of Bank of Stockton.



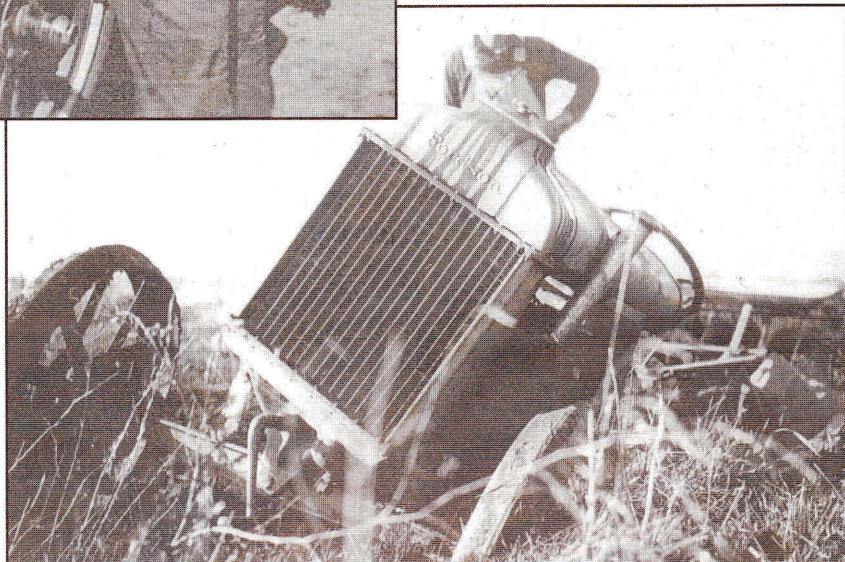
▲ Mechanic Martha Handel, working on her Chevy with daughter Bernice helping.



Kathleen Bonham

Interviews with Jake Handel
July and August 1985

Robert Handel Reviewed Story
November 2006



▼ 1920 Fordson Tractor stuck.

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Editor Ralph Lea

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▲ 1919 Plow and Disc demonstration.

times Jake regretted giving up his animals for the tractor. It was difficult to start. The spikes on the back wheels kicked up lots of dirt in the air. Also it got stuck easily.

The farmers of the day kept informed of the latest advancements in farming by visits with the government farm advisor. The farm bureaus helped the farmer to keep up with the latest agricultural developments as did the salesmen that came to the farmer's home to demonstrate the latest in farming technology.